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Constitutional Remarks

ADDRESSED TO THE

PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN,

UPON THE SUBJECT OF THE LATE

TRIAL OF RICHARD CARLILE,

FOR

REPUBLISHING PAINE'S AGE OF REASON.

IN SIX PARTS.

BY

A MEMBER OF GRAY'S INN.

Frederic Fox

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INTRODUCTION.

IN an age like the present, ever teeming with new and important incident to strike and agitate the public mind ;—in an age when factious and desperate schemes require that the arm of authority should be nerved with more than ordinary vigour, that the press should be untainted by the profligate and revolutionary notions of the day, and above all, that the best principled part of the community should be preserved from delusion by the most pathetic and forcible argument ;—in such an age can it be inconsistent with my duty as a Christian and a Student in the Law, though young and most humble in my pretensions, to stand forth in vindication of the religion and constitution of my country ?

It is natural that such a trial as that of Richard Carlile should in any nation excite an extraordinary sensation. The happiness of mankind

at large is too deeply involved in the subject of it to permit of apathy, or cool expression of opinion ; much more then in such a land as ours, where, without ungoverned license, we enjoy the purest liberty, it was to have been expected, that the most intense feelings would be awakened, and fresh and anxious speculations excited.

Can it be, is it not a dream, that in the year 1819, we are called upon to support even the foundation-stone of our holy faith? I am convinced, from what I myself heard fall from the lips of this bold oppugner, that there is reason in the appeal I am about to make. For though, amongst the more enlightened of those who are inclined to be sceptical in their opinions, the grossness of this man's attack upon the Scriptures, must have created disgust rather than conviction, yet I fear, and I think I may use stronger epithets, I have no doubt, that amidst the crowded Court, there were many unhappy individuals, who may have imbibed the poison he was attempting to disseminate, and many more who have not been able to divest their minds of very painful, though indefinable, im-

pressions. Yet we cannot admit, that any fresh discoveries have been made by Carlile, or his coadjutors, which can invalidate the Scriptures. They will stand impregnable as their great Author. The objections of Carlile are stale as infidelity itself. Nor is it for a moment to be imagined that it is regard to morality and the honour of the Deity that influences Carlile. He seems to dwell with peculiar emphasis upon this idea: but what can be more futile? Is not this attempt but a branch, a mere ligature, of that plotting and mischievous spirit which has so long distracted the country?—Deism and Fanaticism, for they are about on a par, have usually paved the way for, and gone hand in hand with, insurrection and rebellion.

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Constitutional Remarks,

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PART I.

*Revealed Religion considered in itself, and
distinct from State Authority.*

I must premise, that it is not my intention, in any respect, to controvert the objections of Carle to divine Revelation, these having been long since answered : I shall, therefore, content myself with simply referring my readers to the great and conclusive authorities in the note subjoined *. But I felt that I could not, with propriety, have entered upon the subject in

* Paley's Evidences ; Gisborne's Natural Theology ; Graves on the Pentateuch ; Gregory's Letters on the Evidences of the Christian Religion ; Chalmers's Evidences ; Harmer's Observations ; Burder's Oriental Customs ; Dwight's Discourses ; Watson's Apology for the Bible ; Hall's Sermon on Infidelity ; Pensées de Pascal ; Recherches Philosophiques sur les Preuves du Christianisme, par C. Bonnet ; Grotius de Veritate Christianæ Religionis ; Boyle's Lectures, &c. &c.

question, without a few preliminary remarks upon that revelation of the will of God, which is, and ever will be, the foundation of the Christian's hope and the Christian's triumph. Revealed religion must always be a stumbling-block, so long as it is contemplated on the side of passion and prejudice alone. Its opponents pretend to prove its weakness, on the ground of its irrationality: but let reason be applied to revelation, as it would be applied to science. What geometrician, from specious appearances alone, would assume the truth of his problem? He never would anticipate conclusions which his figure refused to admit; he meets with difficulties; his scheme is disjointed; he does not, upon this, presume that his lines and his circles were unmeaning, and his object unattainable. Because his mind is embarrassed, does it prove that the science, or any branch of it, is false? Apply the same argument to revealed religion, and it can require no other test.

It is to deny the omniscience and omnipresence of the Deity; to question his regard to small things as well as great; to doubt his interference with the affairs of earth as well as those of heaven: and if the earth, as a whole, can lay claim to the sovereignty of God, can any part of this whole be excluded? This would

be contrary to the first principles of science. Then is it not equally inconsistent to question the wisdom of that kind and degree of interference which God has selected for our government, merely on account of its occasional difficulty? As fresh discoveries are continually elicited in science, so confirmatory evidence of Scripture is ever gathering upon us, particularly with reference to the known customs of oriental nations in the present day.

If there were any thing abstractedly absurd and unnatural in Revelation, as its opponents contend, it would then become questionable whether we should receive it. But the reverse of this is the fact. That stale and tortured argument of Deism, That it is inconsistent with the mercy of the Creator to visit all mankind with a curse for the simple transgression of our first parent, in eating the forbidden fruit, even confutes itself. It is not the order or species of offence which has incurred the displeasure of Heaven. Our first parents were endowed with superior intelligence, yea even blessed with the visitations of the Almighty. They were warned of the conditions upon which they held their happiness. There was but one restriction. It is apart from the question what that restriction might be; they burst the only restraint imposed upon them, and entailed the fatal consequences

upon their posterity. Do we not see every day in common life the misery which the father of a family may by one single act of transgression transmit to his innocent offspring*? Then, as the descendants of an imprudent parent, in common life, have frequently to endure the consequent reproach of mankind, so the whole earth is that family in the view of God which has incurred eternal shame, by the sin of the forefather. But mark the issue: men seldom remember to be gracious. Time, indeed, may assuage the fiercest passions; and time may entomb the blackest crimes. But the ways of God are not as the ways of men. He is not wrought upon by lapse of time; but in the very moment of judgment he remembers mercy; and the same voice which expelled our first parents from Eden, gave tokens of pardon in the promise of a Redeemer.

It may perhaps be allowable here to digress for a moment upon one or two of the specious and sapient arguments made use of by Carle in the course of his defence. This bold blasphemer seems to prove greatly to his own satisfaction, that two hands have been employed in the composition of the two first chapters of

* I do not here allude to the case of illegitimate children, though that indeed may bear pretty strongly upon my argument.

Genesis, viz. that throughout the whole of the first chapter, and the three first verses of the second chapter, whenever the Almighty is named, he is introduced by the single epithet "God;" but that the remainder of the second chapter ever uses the phrase "Lord God." This is singularly the fact. But is such an incident, unaccompanied with other circumstances, sufficiently strong to overthrow our faith? Nothing can be more fallacious. We must look at the Bible, though a composition grand and beautiful, yet peculiarly stamped with simplicity.

In composing a letter to a friend, or a work of taste, we are at liberty to launch into the regions of fancy; and where we are obliged frequently to recur to the same epithet, it is customary to vary it, occasionally substituting one for another. This is more pleasing to the ear. But in all statements of important affairs, acts of Parliament, deeds, &c. we may observe that the word first chosen is generally preserved to express the same idea throughout. And as to the change here objected to, beginning at the fourth verse of the second chapter, what is more natural than to suppose the inspired writer reposed at the end of the third verse (or at least that portion of the Scripture which we call the third verse, for the division

into chapter and verse is of subsequent introduction); and at another period of time, when he renewed his labours, he arbitrarily used a different phrase as influenced by the Spirit of God, and in the same simplicity of style continued to use that epithet which, when once written, became more striking to the mind?

Carlile has also laid great stress upon the style in which the creation is mentioned by Moses, where such consequence is given to our earth and its appendages, and the formation of the sublimer works of the universe is specified but, as it were, collaterally. This modern Galileo contends, that our received notions of astronomy prove this to be absolutely false. But I fear his vision is as clouded here as on most other occasions: for we must consider that Moses is inspired to write the history of the world for the inhabitants of earth. If he had been deputed to dispense this knowledge in any other sphere, we may presume it would have been differently couched; but in giving a revelation intended for man, is it not natural that it should be so constituted as to prepossess him in favour of that state to which he is destined? is not this consonant to the goodness of God? The history unfolds every thing in a manner perfectly simple, but is delivered in that style which is most calculated to impress

mankind, and gratify the best and highest feelings—that the sun, moon, and stars were created for the benefit of man ; but does it ever state for his benefit *exclusively*? We have no reason to doubt, but that our earth holds the same relative connexion with the rest of the universe that any other planet does to the earth. And we have reason to think, that any dispensation from God to another sphere, would be transmitted in terms in some degree analogous to that vouchsafed to our own.

It is unnecessary to follow this philosopher any farther in his researches. He must now join the antiquarian fishermen at the Tiber, if he would seek fresh evidence to support his opinions ; for his own bags of literature have served but to confound his flimsy speculations.

It does not come within the province of my undertaking to defend every step of holy ground from the rude and scurrilous attacks of infidelity. I wish simply to set before a people professing Christianity, a reason of the hope that is in them. What, then, is there in this insulted volume of which its adversaries so bitterly complain? They only publish their own infamy by objecting to its impurity. Where are to be found lessons of more refined morality? Their fastidious feelings cannot endure

to hear that the favourites of Heaven too often displayed the frailty of their nature. They could not blacken the hero of a romance with such instances of criminality as degraded the characters of David and Solomon. But let it be remembered that these are melancholy facts of history: and to draw inferences against the Scriptures from these circumstances, is the deepest ingratitude: for are they not given as beacons for our avoidance in every instance where the frailty of the ancient worthies is described? We are also told of the fruits of their disobedience in their personal sufferings. And to evince the wrath of the Almighty against sin, we not unfrequently observe even empires involved in the consequences of individual transgression.

There can be no greater strength in the objection to Revelation, on the ground of the selection of the Hebrews as a favoured and peculiar people, whilst the rest of mankind lived without a special dispensation, than may be raised on account of diversity of talent, rank, or opulence. In this respect, it was the same under the Jewish as the Christian dispensation. The great distinction was to be made in a future state; and if the Jews enjoyed higher privileges than their neighbours, their graces were expected to be brighter. There is not a

more established principle in our faith, than that we are to be judged according to the talents bestowed upon us. We nowhere find that the souls of men are to be forfeited for never having heard of the sound of the Gospel. It is for hearing, and denying credence to this inviting voice, that the awful penalty is to be paid *. It must be allowed there are great difficulties in this point, which I will not pretend to elucidate: it is one of the mysteries of our religion.

To touch now more particularly upon the Christian economy: I think conviction upon this subject must advance with rapid strides if we studiously search the Scriptures. It is impossible any where to find a work so divided, and yet so deeply connected, as the Bible.—It is one grand and sublime whole: it commences with the history of a peculiar people; throughout the books of the Old Testament numerous passages are interspersed which give the promise of a Redeemer. These specify his character without the least semblance of contradiction; they

* “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the work which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.” 15th St. John’s Gospel, 22 and 24.

describe his lofty attributes; they even portray the awful circumstances of his death and burial. Allusions, types, and visions, prefigured the advent of our Saviour: his appearance justified every prophecy, and though conversion was more partial under his own ministration than that of his followers, yet this only confirms our argument, for his *atonement* was the watchword of universal peace, and good will to men. Sir Isaac Newton, and others, have reconciled almost every instance of chronological difficulty respecting the Scriptures. If sceptics will not bow to heavenly authority, the tongue of their own darling philosophy, at any rate, should silence them.

It is the great peculiarity of the Christian faith, that it has flourished independent of worldly support:—nay, like the Hebrews in Egypt, it has triumphed in persecution; and, as a mighty torrent, bursting from its puny boundaries, it has driven before it every object of base, and cruel, and malevolent opposition.

PART II.

Revealed Religion considered under the Auspices of civil Government, and particularly that of Great Britain.

IT is not pretended that the Christian faith has, in the abstract, gained greater strength and influence from the support of civil establishments; but we have this remarkable attestation to its truth, that every religious imposture has been invented by the ruler for the purpose of degrading and fettering the mind of his vassal; whereas, our religion aimed only at the happiness of our race, took its rise from the manger of Bethlehem, and has been marching on progressively, till it has reposed, with some diversity of character, on every throne of Europe. A religion which peculiarly addressed itself to the poor and the despised; which repelled with scorn every worldly fascination, and pointed its persecuted professors to a future happiness indefinable and invisible; was, in its infancy, little calculated to win the mighty, the proud, the selfish, and the dissipated.

The more intelligent Romans, during the empire of the Cæsars, were much confounded

by the spread of this new schism, as they considered it; and Pliny's letter* to Trajan upon the subject, displays a very natural state of mind under such a dilemma. His kindness of disposition recoiled at the idea of persecution in a case of such harmless secession; but the deserted temples, and the extinguished fires upon the altars of Paganism, made him tremble for the fate of his national deities.

We have every reason to presume, from the writings of the ancient fathers, that, in the earlier ages of the church, when the fires of martyrdom were kindled in every region which acknowledged the name of Christ, the influence of the Holy Spirit was experienced to a much greater degree than at any subsequent period, and by that means the victims of persecution were enabled to support their sufferings with a constancy which is now unknown. This is quite consonant to the usual procedure of God; according to the exigence, so are the means he provides. As the church advanced in influence, it was gradually deprived of this special interference.

A very good evidence to the truth of Christianity may be deduced from the circumstance

* Letter XCVII.

of the Bible being so generally addressed to the poor and illiterate; for, although it is alike professedly received by the great, the opulent, and the learned; yet it is a known fact in Christian experience, that there is no period of life when the Gospel promises yield such rich consolation as they do in the bitter hour of tribulation.

The Bishop of Rome, in his original institution, exercised a legitimate authority. It was one of the most important of the apostolic functions to appoint proper bishops and deacons over those districts which acknowledged the Christian faith; but so strenuously did our Saviour and his disciples discountenance an assumption of secular jurisdiction, it may well confound the unenlightened, that the minds, as well as the persons and property of so many myriads of beings should so long have been fettered by the Popes, those most unrighteous descendants of St. Peter. — “Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s,” were the self-denying and unassuming words of the Redeemer. There is nothing in the assumption of Papal authority which can in any degree invalidate the sacred writings; on the contrary, it goes in furtherance of their establishment. There is the same reason for concluding that this usurped hierarchy is foretold in the Scripture, as are the divisions and bickerings amongst less presumptuous and cor-

rupted Christians, both of which are alike fore-shown in Scripture prophecy. I most readily concede we have no authority for erecting the priesthood, as such, into arbitrary proprietors of the liberties and property of mankind. The Jewish people are no precedent—they were a theocracy, set apart by God himself for a special purpose, viz. that, as repositories, in the midst of a debased and profligate world, they might preserve the spirit of religion from being lost in the polytheism of the age. Our Saviour came professedly to draw all nations to himself; to throw down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile: and no other power than that which erected the Hebrew government can establish an exclusive hierarchy, combining priestly and secular dominion, to enchain mankind.

Suppose, in a particular age of the world, an *extraordinary superstructure* is to be raised for some great purpose, *applicable only to that age*, the fact of certain columns and marbles being used in its elevation, and for that purpose alone, never would be a precedent for their application on any common occasion. Their use, in the one instance, was special; the same circumstance would never occur again; and therefore all argument deducible from their application, in that single instance, must fall to the ground. Let this simile be applied to the Jew-

ish theocracy, as shadowing forth the Christian dispensation.

The Infidel, indeed, should pause before he founds an objection upon the basis of Judaism. If he be a physiognomist, let him analyze the countenance of any descendant of the Hebrew nation, and he may there trace the deep lines of the curse inscribed in indelible characters. If he be a traveller, let him explore the northern, the southern, the eastern, or the western hemispheres, and in their scattered tribes he will ever find fresh attestation to the fulfilment of Scripture prophecy in reference to this devoted people.

It is the pride and glory of Great Britain, that she, through the blessing of the Almighty, has been able to extricate herself from the overwhelming difficulties by which she was once surrounded in matters of religion, and that she has been enabled to plant the standard of her faith on a pedestal so firm, that we ardently hope and trust no open storms of persecution, or secret sappings of infidelity, will be able to destroy.

It is needless to search into the ancient history of our country for evidences of our faith. The thick cloud of ignorance which pervaded the land before the invention of printing, is al-

most a sufficient answer to any questions of this kind; and the Legates and other Popish agents, so long as they maintained their influence among us, too well conducted the ambitious schemes of their ghostly master, to permit the genuine lustre of Revelation to break upon this benighted land. Translations of the Scriptures were unknown, or at least their dissemination was so severely restricted, that it would constitute only an exception to my rule. Those who were acquainted with the Bible had not imbibed its spirit; for we cannot find in it a doctrine more peremptorily enforced than that of extensive dispersion.

The Reformation, then, is the point from which our conclusions must be deduced, as to the influence of religion in this country.

There is nothing more humbling to the mind of man, than the consideration that his best and noblest works have frequently taken their rise, *not* from purity of intention and vastness of design, *but* from what appears to us mere accident, even sometimes from the effects of sin and folly. This was most singularly instanced in Henry the Eighth. His family feuds called down the Papal anathemas, and paved the way for the commencement of that great work, which was so happily completed in the reign of Elizabeth.

I am not going into a defence of the right of Kings, Lords, and Commons, to legislate. I assume this as a known and established principle of the constitution. I know this to be a day of disaffection and scepticism; but let those who are loudest in their objections bring forward a system even approximating to the purity of our own, and I may perhaps yield my allegiance; but, until that is done, I shall consider those lawless and profligate men who run through the country to disseminate their unhallowed opinions, as pirates against our religion and constitution.

It may be contended, that if the three estates have power to enact *one* law, they are without restriction as to another. This, sceptics may admit, will hold in civil affairs, but cannot extend to matters of religion. Now, it is the very liberty our constitution allows us, which gives rise to the question. Our forefathers, in more arbitrary times, doubted not the propriety of the obligation which the State imposed upon them to receive as infallible the dogmas of the Romish church. To have questioned it, would have brought upon them all the horrors of excommunication.—But, in fact, the cases are not parallel; for, with the destruction of Papal dominion, this country has also been freed from all alarm on account of inquisitorial vengeance.

Our national faith has been tried by ordeals of every kind and degree : it has surmounted the flames of persecution ; it has confounded opposition ; it has neutralized or converted argument ; it has endured the hardy test of criticism ; besides which, it has been divested of the frippery and impurity, in which the ambitious and self-interested had arrayed it : and with all this, no intelligent mind will dispute the right which the Government has to establish it for the rule of our conduct. But on what terms is it imposed ? Is it with an arbitrary and a cruel hand ? Certainly not. It was necessary, at the first dawn of reformation in this country, that unlimited toleration should not be licensed. So extraordinary a change would, in the hands of designing men, have ruined the cause it was intended to serve ; but the great work proceeded progressively, until it attained its present solidity.

I shall here advert to a few of the laws by which the Papal tyranny was at length finally destroyed in this country.

After King John had so infamously resigned his crown to Pope Innocent the Third, the kingdom was absolutely held, for many years, as a fee of the Papacy. To our English Justinian, Edward the First, we are indebted for first disputing the yoke, by disregarding the me-

naces and Bulls of His Holiness, and in various other ways setting him at defiance. By several Statutes, in the 25th, 27th, 38th, and 40th of Edward the Third, fresh limitations were imposed upon the Papal authority, by which the Holy Father, and his zealous adherents, were denied all power of interference with the presentations and collations to the bishoprics and livings of England; and it was enacted that the degrading cession of King John was absolutely void. In the reign of Richard the Second, several Statutes of the same tenour were passed; and by the 2d of Henry the Fourth, c. 3, all persons accepting exemptions from canonical obedience to their proper ordinary are subjected to the penalties of a *præmunire**.

By those Statutes, and a few others, the Pope was deprived of all substantial power in

* This word in its origin means the offence of creating *imperium in imperio*, or introducing a foreign power into the land, though subsequently extended to other abuses, and by the 16th of Richard II. c. 5, renders the party liable to be put out of the King's protection, and his lands and tenements, goods and chattels, forfeited to the King, and to be attached by his body if he may be found, and brought before the King and his Council, there to answer to the cases aforesaid. It has been determined that the whole penalties of a *præmunire* need not be exacted, but only such of them as the Court may think fit.—2d Lord Raymond, 1361; the King v. Carwood, Stra. 472.

these realms, and finally by several Statutes passed in the 24th and 25th of Henry the Eighth, the following offences subjected the offenders to a præmunire, viz. appealing or suing to Rome for any license or dispensation, or paying obedience to process from thence, or refusal by Dean and Chapter to elect the person nominated by the King, or by an Archbishop or Bishop to confirm or consecrate him. And by three other Statutes passed in the 5th, 13th, and 27th of Queen Elizabeth, the same penalties are incurred by all persons refusing the oath of supremacy, defending the Papal authority in this realm; importing superstitious mummary, mass books; assisting towards the maintenance of Popish seminaries beyond sea, or any Popish priest in England.

Thus the Reformation in this country was by no means so sudden, as is frequently supposed. These several enactments had gradually paved the way for the great event. It has, we trust, been "going on unto perfection." The religious establishment has been settled by the consent of the nation; and were there no other argument, this might be brought forward; for in barbarous countries, where human sacrifice and immolation are practised, we should expect to hear many a mournful voice exclaiming against the established idolatry; but where a

system is pure and holy in itself, and can farther recommend itself—and here is its glorious pre-eminence—by the influence it has ever had in society, by the universal charity it inculcates, and the consolation it affords in the hour of death; surely, then, to refuse assent betrays obdurate scepticism.

The divisions of Christians in this country, or any other, into parties and sects, can prove nothing against the authority of our faith.

In arithmetical calculations there may be one proper, simple, and explicit mode of obtaining a balance; but there are many persons, who, from education, studied preference, or mere whim, may proceed by other less common tracks, and all arrive at the same conclusion; so, in religion, there are many matters of minor importance upon which Christians cannot agree; and in deference to these conscientious scruples, the Legislature, with its accustomed leniency, has, at different times, passed several Statutes for the relief of various denominations of seceders from the Established Church*.

* Vide 1 W. & M. c. 8; 10 Ann, c. 2; 19 G. III. c. 44; for the relief of Protestant Dissenters acknowledging the Trinity, and many other statutes passed for various purposes, wherein certain conscientious scruples of the Society of Friends are incidentally recognised.

It is good evidence of the stability of the English Constitution, and at the same time of the religion it has recognised, that without restraining its professors to one common undeviating rule, they have liberty to branch themselves into various divisions, and yet without doing injury to Church, State, or individual.

If we were ruled by an arbitrary priesthood, we know from dreadful experience that free exercise of opinion would be the prerogative of an Englishman no more. And if we were in the enjoyment of our civil constitution, with all its privileges, and religion were not engrafted into the system, our civil advantages might then be our greatest curse. We might be placed in this distressing dilemma; we must either offend our God by paying obedience to the State, or incur the appellation of ingrates by breaking the laws of our country in seeking the favour of an offended Deity.

But, as it is, they are so incorporated that they go hand in hand, and distribute to every individual his portion of happiness.

Which is the most rational, the most happy state of society—that mode which we are at present in the enjoyment of; or, having discarded

religion from our island, to take up with a cold, selfish, and desperate infidelity?

Looking on the other side for a moment; what could we as a nation, or as individuals, gain by the exchange? I will consider it in both lights. But I must premise, it is my firm persuasion that little distinction can be made between Deism and absolute Atheism; for, if we part from divine revelation, we destroy the only clue whereby to “find out the Almighty;” and as we must ever be in a state of morbid darkness with respect to his character and his attributes, we should then have no certain rule whereby to order or control our conduct, and consequently our inclination would in almost every instance be our sole director. For I appeal to the consciences of my readers, whether in the moment of great temptation to sin they have not been withheld by the clear threatenings held out in the Scriptures, and by those alone; and whether, if, in that awful moment they could have had the certain assurance they were false, they would have resisted the temptation upon the vague idea that a God existed, but without being able to form one clear conception of his attributes?

To consider a state of national Deism, the members of our Senate having no certain rule

to influence them, no stimulus to honour excepting the insufficient check of public opinion, might concur to enact such laws as would enoble and enrich themselves, or their own class. For, in the present happy state of things, it is almost impossible for many men to co-operate in a bad cause; for, as every corrupt man fears that his neighbour holds those great principles in esteem which are so generally diffused, he dare not trust his evil machinations to the wind—he would fear that every breath might be treacherous; but when all his neighbours acknowledge the same wild nonentity, he cannot but argue with himself that his friends can have no stronger check. Courts of justice would be opened almost in vain; for what is to bind the witness to his word? his sense of the omniscience of God? As his ideas upon this subject must be utterly indefinable, that cannot be.—His honour? Impossible! Would the master suffer the labourer to repose one day in seven from his wearying occupation, in order that he might recruit his exhausted strength and spirits? or even if he did permit it, masters could never agree upon which day it should be. This would be decided by casualty; the convenience, and caprice, of cruel lordship. There would never be a day of *general* repose, and thus the poor man would be deprived of half his happiness; for, whilst he was exempted, his friend with

whom he took sweet counsel on the sabbath, would be labouring for the goods that perish; no Sunday or charity schools would then be known; for, as the Bible was disavowed, what would induce the philanthropist to search out the children of the poor, and instruct them in the rudiments of knowledge?

To touch now upon individual Deism: I think we must assume, that this would not produce results more beneficial. A man of rank and opulence, who has many servants and dependants at his command, if that voice is still which once cried, "Charity suffereth long," what would teach him to endure their little failings? Animal passion would be his guide, and the cruel lash would ever be substituted for the mild reproof. The opulent would never distribute alms from a sense of duty; and I much fear that what the wretched lost in that way, would not be recompensed under the influence of vain glory alone.—But above all, where would the outcast, the afflicted, and the dying, look for consolation? every earthly support has failed, and they are left a prey to reckless despair. The Bible once afforded solace, for none were so abject but they could obtain a Bible. This holy charter of their celestial inheritance was dispensed "without money, and without price;" but now it is declared a fallacy; their only prop

is taken from them, and heartless suicide is their sole resource.—Shall we ever live to witness this awful picture? Heaven forbid! Britain is a Christian land; and whilst a heart shall vibrate upon these free shores, I trust the Gospel revelation will still go on “conquering and to conquer.”

PART III.

Evidences in Proof of the Legality of Carlile's Indictment.

It has been commonly affirmed, that the State has no right to interfere with, or circumscribe, the religious opinions of any man. As I have attempted to show, in the foregoing division of the subject, the Christian faith is deeply ingrafted on the constitution; yet the law respecting it has been so modified and adjusted, as to allow every latitude to the exercise of private judgment, provided the main principles of that belief are not thereby endangered. But if the evidences of religion are clear and indisputable, and, being so, are as much sanctioned and established by the Legislature, as any civil ordinance; and further, have been long approved of, and trusted in, by all classes of men, however they may differ upon political points; then how comes it to be a question, whether the Government has a right to protect this mighty bulwark of a nation's hopes?

The argument our opponents would use is this, that though they are bound as members of

society by any law which their representatives in Parliament may enact, in respect of civil obligation, yet that all laws bearing reference to a future state, and tending to fetter the mind, must be nugatory; as these are encroachments on the special prerogative of Deity. This may be specious in appearance, yet it is in effect totally inconclusive.

But even suppose the anomalous case of a conscientious Deist, of what privileges is he actually deprived? If he can keep his pestilential opinions to himself, no law can impede the progress of his thoughts, however tainted they may be. He enjoys the same civil rights as his neighbour: and though his income may be slightly curtailed in supporting a religion he does not acknowledge; yet this is but a trivial penalty. But when a man can so far insult the Legislature of his country, as to disperse those sentiments abroad, which the nation at large, by the voice of its representatives, has declared to be erroneous, and destructive to happiness; then it surely is time for the magistrate to interpose, and crush the fatal error in its earliest stage.

It is monstrous to argue that silent contempt, in such a case, is the only proper confutation: this mode may be very commendable in instances of common imposition, when the ob-

ject of excitement is remarkable only for its novelty, or its absurdity. But where the enemy strikes at the very root of that faith which our forefathers have shed their best blood to establish, other weapons must be resorted to. We must not wait till every villager in the realm has partaken of the bitter potion which may involve him in eternal misery.

For though it is to argument we are invited, yet latter Deists have banished fair argument from the question, and wisely, for it could not support its scrutiny ; but they have substituted in its stead, horrid blasphemy, unproved asseveration, and loud unmeaning contention.

The secret sneer and the treacherous insinuation of a Gibbon, or a Hume, may, indeed, have been fatally pernicious to certain classes in society, and not the less so from the fascinating colours in which they have arrayed their opinions ; but it is to be lamented, that such systems of attack must ever be left to the exclusive judgments of the Almighty : for, until some *definable overt* act of aggression, no human tribunal can interfere.

Though I very much doubt the assumption of some of our great divines, that, were the Church establishment overturned, the State must

necessarily fall ; indeed, I am clearly of opinion that our constitution is firm enough to bear such a disunion — yet, on the other hand, I am as decided, that the fact of having an Establishment, founded on a basis so solidly and wisely constituted, is the very means of preserving our religion from the more frequent and outrageous attacks of infidelity. For, if it were a positive rule of our government, that no exclusive cognizance should be taken of any particular mode of belief, I must affirm, it would be found extremely difficult, for all the contending parties, professing Christianity, to come to an understanding, by the voice of their representatives, as to what limitations should be put to the exercise, or expression, of licentious opinion. But the Established Church, by its extensive influence in the nation, and weighty voice in the Senate, has been able to accomplish this important object. No severity or intolerance has been exercised ; for what could not altogether be effected at the early stages of the Reformation, has been since accomplished.

The Legislature has at various times relieved the consciences of the scrupulous upon disputed points. But how has that relief been granted ? Not by virtue of virulent and insulting abuse of the established government or religion, but by cool calculation, by solid argument and deep

conviction. And are not these the criteria, by which proposed alterations of importance are to be estimated?

Though it may be contended, that it were vain for an individual to attempt to introduce an enactment without previously winning the co-operation of some powerful champions; (and how is that to be effected without trying the sense of the nation by a free circulation of opinion?) yet as all men are presumed to have received, from nature, or education, a notion of what is in itself, or by the rules of civilized society, right and wrong, the law would not so far insult the understanding of any man as to suppose him incapable of judging between what would be commendable or prudent, and what would be indecorous or highly heinous, to bring forward for public discussion.

No man, by the laws of this country, or of any civilized community, has a right to disseminate sentiments which tend to bring into contempt, or abrogate, its most sacred institutions. An individual in this dilemma can have, ought to have, but two alternatives; either to confine his opinions to his own breast, where they will necessarily be unmolested, or, if he unhappily considers these sentiments indispensable to the well-being of mankind, to present them accord-

ing to the accustomed forms before the Legislature for its sanction or approval. If he has no influence he cannot complain: so far as regards the argument, he is in no worse situation than thousands of his countrymen, who, in a better cause, have conceived mighty projects which untoward circumstances have blasted. If he has influence, he has nothing to do but to submit his wonderful discoveries to those, whose united intelligence will give the most satisfactory decision.

But this philosophic inquirer knows, that he has every thing to fear from the wisdom and the integrity of such a tribunal; for, though here and there a solitary sceptic may be found, who will wreck his fairest hopes upon the quicksands of a bewildered and prostituted reason; yet the goodness of the Almighty has too deeply engraven upon the hearts of mankind at large, the great principles of eternal truth, to leave room for an anxious thought that they will ever be sacrificed at the shrine of a perverted imagination.

If I have carried conviction but upon one of the foregoing arguments, I trust, I am not presumptuous, in pronouncing Richard Carlile guilty of a high misdemeanor against the State.

The "Age of Reason," by Thomas Paine, was a proscribed volume—a volume composed with

the clear and express intention of undermining the Christian religion ; and the Christian religion being part of the law of Great Britain, consequently, of setting that law at defiance.

Its republication must be as illegal as the original offence, because the question is not, who first broached certain ideas couched in certain language,—but who has committed the offence of uttering and dispersing those opinions, which, ipso facto, have incurred the just penalty of the law.

Carlile's plea of "Not Guilty" was founded, not upon the grounds of disowning the republication, but upon matter irrelevant to the prosecution.

So incorporated is the Christian religion with the Constitution, that no question has ever been entertained, but that our courts of judicature could, by virtue of the common law, and independent of Parliamentary enactments, take cognizance of offences against its sacred institutions.

The ecclesiastical courts have indeed generally claimed jurisdiction over spiritual offences ; but as those courts derive their existence, and

their institutions, from the civil law, and exercise their prerogatives merely by sufferance, and indeed to carry their judgments into effect, are generally compelled to resort to the civil power; consequently, their native strength would be quite incompetent to restrain the licentiousness of the people. The common law has, therefore, generally interposed in cases of extremity, not for the purpose of robbing, or defrauding, the proper courts of their privileges; but merely to perfect that portion of the executive government, which would otherwise have been deficient.

Carlile was, therefore, clearly indictable, and, in fact, several offenders have been convicted on similar grounds, by the common law.

An affirmative statute never deprives the common law of its jurisdiction; it merely defines, and renders indubitable, that which was, in some respects, discretionary.

The Attorney General was, of course, therefore, at liberty to proceed at common law, as in fact he did, or under the statute of 9 and 10 of William III. c. 32, which, so far as regards the present subject, runs as follows: If any person educated in, or having made profession of, the

Christian religion, shall be convicted in any of the Courts of Westminster, or at the assizes, of denying any one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity to be God, or of maintaining that there are more Gods than one, or of denying the truth of the Christian religion, or the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, he shall be subject to the penalties therein mentioned.

Now, this is a public statute, unrepealed in any instance (excepting that of impugning the doctrine of the Trinity, which, as I shall afterwards have occasion to remark upon, has been relieved against), and is clear and intelligible, not even leaving an offender the plea of ignorance, as by the most distant possibility he might otherwise, perhaps, have brought forward.

It cannot be contended that Carlile, before he was served with the process, should have been warned by the Attorney General of his danger, and given time and opportunity for reparation. For aught I know to the contrary, this may have been done, but whether it were, or not, is apart from the question; for no man has a right, with his eyes open, to violate the most sacred institutions of his country; and then, instead of paying the forfeited penalty, expect a

formal warning, and dismissal, upon promise of amendment.

According to such a doctrine, this deep reasoner would require impunity for every first offence, and therefore, to suit his case, would approve that foolish legal doctrine of claiming the benefit of clergy, which upon any other occasion, this very individual would be the first to ridicule.

However, Carlile has not fallen into this error; for I believe up to the time, and during the progress, of his trial, he, or his friends, have been dispersing this infamous publication throughout the country.

It may be contended, that the character of that religion which has been so foully aspersed, disclaims every exercise of severity in support of its doctrines, and that our opponents are furnished with an argument in favour of its fallacy, if it can in any way connive at, what they are pleased to call, persecution. But though the prosecutors, not the persecutors, of this arch offender, may have a deep impression on their minds of the spirit of patient forbearance, which the Scriptures inculcate, and that, however shocked and disgusted they may be, at the horrid blasphemies poured upon the revelation of

God, it is their duty, *as Christians*, to leave final retribution to the work of Heaven : yet let these specious objectors consider, that there are also duties which men in authority owe to society ; and that it is in discharge of those duties, and of those duties alone, this prosecution has been conducted.

The injunction of our Saviour, “ Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s,” clearly recognises the respective duties of the magistrate and the subject ; and if the introduction of any glaring error into a state threatens to dissolve the connexions of that community, it surely becomes a binding obligation upon the magistrate, and his officers, to punish the offender. That case has unhappily been realized ; and the government of Great Britain, with the same spirit of magnanimity which has so long distinguished it amongst the nations, has subjected the offence to public and impartial scrutiny, and now exacts of its perpetrator the forfeited penalty.

PART IV.

An Examination of the Mode of Defence resorted to by Carlile upon his Trial.

HAVING now, I hope, satisfactorily established the legality of this man's indictment, I will proceed to offer some remarks upon that line of conduct which he prescribed for himself upon his trial. The Learned Judge, who presided, with such infinite honour to himself, and satisfaction to the country, was placed in a most painful situation. On the one hand, the strict rule of law might have prompted him to confine the Defendant to the mere issue in question—whether or not he had infringed the established law, by republishing a work calculated to bring the Holy Scriptures into disrepute; but, on the other hand, a desire to give the Defendant that latitude which his ungrateful impertinence ill requited, led him to pursue the course which he ultimately chose.

No doubt it would have been a serious disappointment to this zealous opinionist to have had his eloquence blunted at the outset: after having groped in all the caverns of literature, in search of evidence to support his positions, it would have been cruel in the extreme to have

toppled him down headlong from the first step of the eminence he aspired to attain. By a most liberal and unusual extension of that rule which authorizes the Judge to stand counsel for the prisoner, the Defendant was allowed to deviate from the mere issue in question, and to go into extraneous evidence. The republication and sale of the "Age of Reason" were proved, and certain select passages from the work were read, as specified in the indictment. These through the public journals have been in every body's hands, by which I am relieved from the necessity of a disgusting repetition.

The Defendant, upon hearing the murmur of horror which followed this exhibition, instead of falling on his knees, and humbly asking the pardon of an insulted Judge and Jury, and craving their intercession on his behalf, with an offended God, proceeded with unblushing effrontery to justify his conduct.

One or two of his sapient arguments, founded upon the Book of Genesis, I have introduced into the first division of my subject, and therefore need not specifically advert to them again.

An Act of Parliament was passed in the 53d year of the present reign (c. 160), for the relief of Unitarian Dissenters, whereby so much of the

Act of William III. recited in my last division, as respects the doctrine of the Trinity, was repealed. This partial repeal Carlile appears to have reposed on as a main pillar in his defence: but a more extraordinary application of reasoning cannot be instanced.

Carlile, I apprehend, would be equally forward with ourselves to allow that a part is not a whole—that a partial repeal is not an entire repeal: but then he asserts, that the Christian religion, being founded on the doctrine of the Trinity, must either stand or fall with it; and by the partial abrogation before mentioned, the whole evidence of Christianity is invalidated. I am here neither arguing for or against Unitarianism; but, as a humble individual, I declare myself to be no Unitarian, lest I should be thought to be involved in that question. It would be as much out of character in me to enter upon such a disputation here, as it was impertinent in Carlile to introduce it into a court of justice.

There are several distinct clauses in the Act of William, and a transgression against any one of which, would, primarily, render the party liable to the penalties of the Act. If, then, he impugns the doctrine of the Trinity, and upon prosecution pleads the Unitarian Act, he is ac-

quitted : but if he *reviles* or *blasphemes* the doctrine of the Trinity, I believe no candid Unitarian would wish to see him absolved. Now let that clause of the Act of William be out of the question, for a moment, and he still has trampled upon both the spirit and letter of the Act, by “denying the truth of the Christian religion,” and the “divine authority of the Holy Scriptures ;” nay, he has done more, for he has *reviled* and *blasphemed* the Holy Scriptures, and consequently the doctrine of the Trinity, which the Unitarian Act was never meant to sanction.

Thus do abandoned and ungrateful men take advantage of the lenient toleration of our laws.

The impudence of Carlile was remarkably instanced in his summoning several distinguished characters of different parties, for the purpose of confusing their testimony : but if the Court had sanctioned such a procedure, where would have been the triumph of Deism ? Would a smile from the spectators have confounded an upright and intelligent Jury ? And, supposing a Christian and a Jew had been confronted, what would have been the result ? If the arguments of one Christian had failed to convince one Jew, and *vice versâ*, yet the Bible would still remain, and the commentaries would still retain their

value. We had never agreed to venture our heaven-born faith upon the single combat of two or more individuals, whom infidelity had selected. If the contest had been between a Musselman and a Hindoo, the case would be the same: for though one of them had told us we were after death to enjoy a sensual paradise; or the other, that the destructive insect must be carefully preserved, because the human soul would inhabit it; yet the Christian faith would not have suffered from such a controversy; on the contrary, it would have come off victorious; for, by a comparison with every other system, its purity, its intelligence, and its attractiveness, would have risen from the ordeal in glorious array.

But, further, this champion of Deism appears to have attached peculiar importance to the persecutions which have in different ages of the church been carried on against those coming under the unhappy denomination of heretics: and for this purpose he amused his auditors with a tedious recitation from a tract called "The History of the Bible," circulated by the Tract Society, and other works equally edifying and proper in any place but a court of justice. And what does all this prove? Do we pretend to deny that unhappy schisms and disunions have taken place in the church? We admit all this; and, further, we allow that persecutions of the

most awful and unrelenting character have been carried on: but we do not concede that they were conducted by *Christians* against *Christians*. Though Carlyle is not an old man, or we might utterly despair of him; yet I think he must have had sufficient experience to know, that men are not always to be estimated by the names or dignities they assume. If I may form an opinion of his political, by his religious creed, he is a man who would be for divesting his betters of every surplusage, and judging of them in their natural state. Then let him be at least as candid in passing a decision upon clerical persecution—a name is not a substance. If certain men have persecuted, they were *not* Christians. Too often in common life we are obliged to doubt the self-commendation of men, upon presumption alone, and without positive proof of their dishonour. Then we surely can find no difficulty in unmasking and disclaiming those who by demonstrable and unequivocal acts, have so foully abused the doctrine of the cross.

It is natural for a man, when he is making bold asseverations, and drawing certain untenable conclusions from them, to infer, if he is unanswered by those who surround him, that his victory is complete, and he has nothing to do but to claim his reward. This, I have no

doubt, was the flattering feeling of Carlile during the progress of his cause. His arguments were for the most part beneath the notice of the Judge, and indifferent to the Jury, and consequently he had liberty to pursue his strain of eloquence to its highest climax, without much interruption : but in fact he was following a phantom all the time ; he talked like a king's fool, but by sufferance, and when his harangue was concluded had gained nothing but great exhaustion of bodily strength and spirits. Yet I cannot but think he won particular regard and respect for the Learned Judge and the Jury who convicted him. No plea can ever be urged that he had not the fairest, the most patient hearing. The latitude allowed him was free and voluntary on the part of the Judge, though the delinquent impertinently claimed it as his right.

A question might perhaps have been raised as to the propriety of dispersing the trial through the kingdom, at least until certain passages had been expunged : for the matter laid in the indictment, and some of the comments upon the Scripture by Carlile, in the course of the trial, are in themselves so revolting, as to be ill adapted for superficial readers, who, receiving only the bane, have neither means nor opportunity to apply the antidote. But Carlile, like many men of his own stamp, though he has not

hit his point, has, we have reason to congratulate ourselves, shot so far beyond it, as for the most part to confute his own arguments ; and this, coupled with the spirited addresses of the Attorney General and Mr. Gurney, and more particularly the Christian and benignant charge of the Learned Judge, we have reason to hope will in some degree counteract the effects of such contagious opinions.

Carlile in the progress of his trial took frequent occasion, with apparent politeness, but real sarcasm, to apologize for the present Attorney General, on account of his procedure in the prosecution, from the circumstance of the indictment having been prepared by Sir Samuel Shepherd, his predecessor. Now I am convinced the Attorney General would reject such an apology with disdain ; for it is the absolute duty of a sentinel planted on a watch-tower, to guard with indefatigable vigilance every approach to the unconscious citadel. Carlile, or any other man placed in Carlile's situation, has as much reason to complain of the Learned Judge who gives the sentence, or the Jury who convict, as of the Attorney General who indicts : they are all equally instruments in the hands of the constitution. When a man has violated the law, it is as much the duty of the Attorney General to prosecute, as it is of the Judge and Jury to take

their respective places in the trial : they are all part of one system ; and the same power that vests the liberty of the subject in the hands of twelve indifferent citizens, viz. the law of the land, has also commanded its legal officer to take cognizance of offences imperatively calling for their scrutiny.

It is quite consistent with the other parts of his conduct, for Carlile to complain of vindictiveness in the Attorney General, and even in the Judge : it is a cant phrase. The binding official duties of the Attorney General answer one part of the objection ; and the extraordinary license allowed to the delinquent is in ample satisfaction of the other part.

The verdict of the Jury against him was, perhaps, unexpected, on the part of this unhappy man ; but he should have deeply considered before he risked his principles upon the determination of twelve intelligent Christians, that without any feeling of sympathy in his favour, the point in issue was totally unconnected with any political question, whatever might be its general bearing : that it involved this momentous inquiry, whether the bulwark of our country, the Christian religion, was still to retain its lofty pre-eminence ; or whether the floodgates of infidelity were to be unbarred, and

these once happy realms left as a beacon to surrounding nations, a prey to desolation. May the blessing of Heaven rest upon them for the verdict they have given !

As to the infatuated man himself, I pity his desperate case ; and I fervently wish his sentence may be as lenient as is consistent with the enormity of the offence ; and if these pages should ever meet his eye, let him know that their writer has uttered his sentiments without one feeling of vindictiveness : that it is his most anxious hope, that Carlile will, in some degree, atone for his fatal errors, by an open recantation, by a patient resignation to the punishments of a violated law ; and above all, that, having shed the bitter tears of repentance, he may be received into the favour of his merciful Creator.

PART V.

On the Effect which this Prosecution ought to have upon the public Mind.

My undertaking would be very incomplete, if I did not avail myself of this opportunity to make a few observations upon the immediate tendency of a subject which has so fully engrossed the public attention. I know there are many persons, perhaps, the greatest proportion of the populace in this country, who consider the trial of Richard Carlile, but as a link in the great confederation for "radical reform," a step towards the attainment of their mischievous schemes; and a more proper foundation-stone could not be constituted.

When France had been thoroughly deluged by the licentious opinions of her deistical writers, she was more easily moulded to the bloody plans of Robespierre.

A discontented people dare not seize with violence on the prerogatives of royalty, whilst they remember the sacredness of their oaths of allegiance, either actually or virtually pledged; whilst they retain any reverence for the Holy

Volume, which points out the only path to that God, by whom "kings reign, and princes decree justice." But if they can once lay aside their respect for revelation, as they have then disowned any knowledge of those injunctions which command them to "honour the King," not to "covet their neighbour's goods," and to observe the enumerations of the Decalogue, what is to restrain an ungrateful, a discontented people from a state of total anarchy? Will the vague idea of an unknown, an incomprehensible God, be sufficient to guide and steady the fabric?

If a traveller were to tell his wondering countrymen of an extraordinary temple that reared its lofty dome upon some distant continent, but gave no description of its figure, there are not two individuals who, upon a comparison of sentiments, would have conceived exactly the same idea of this temple, and who would have drawn two corresponding plans of it: so, if we part with the Bible, which has hitherto illumined our minds, we shall have no standard whereby to judge of the attributes of Deity. One man will, in his vain imagination, designate *mercy* as the prominent perfection in the divine nature, and will, consequently, argue, that whatever crimes human passions may lead to, yet after death one act of gracious oblivion will sweep away their remembrance. Another, that the

Almighty is indifferent to the concerns of earth, and, therefore, whether our actions are virtuous or ignoble, is to him equally unimportant; and that, after death, the human and the brute creation are alike consigned to eternal nonentity. A third, perhaps, like the untutored idolater, will worship him as an evil spirit, and deprecate his wrathful interference with the affairs of men. A fourth may by chance be found amidst this Babel of ideas, who, embracing purer notions, has maintained his moral integrity, and has inculcated his principles into the minds of his children. But what security has he for the well-being either of himself or his offspring? His property is liable to the outrages of those who will reason upon the original equality of mankind. He will fear to trust his bosom friend, because, as there is no standard by which they can measure their minds, the man whom he has confided with his dearest interests, may think it his duty, from some unaccountable vagary, to betray him.

One individual, who professes a great reverence for the ancients, may think it proper to introduce a law, that a man may rob his neighbour, provided he does it cleverly; because Lycurgus had done so before him. Another may like to ordain that crippled or unhealthy children should be drowned in the Thames; because the enlightened Romans exercised that species of

cruelty in the Tiber. There is no absurdity in such suppositions ; for if there were no divine injunction to the contrary, what would withhold mankind from such proceedings ? The light of nature ? Impossible ! Why did not the same ray break in upon nations acknowledged to be equal to ourselves in native principle ? But a man who takes the Bible, and consults it as his tutor, will at once steer clear of all these mighty difficulties. It is adapted equally for the study of all classes of men, the governor and the governed. It does not simply set before us the state of mind we should cultivate for private and public devotion—or for the solemnity of a dying hour ; but it also points out encouragements for our support amidst the common avocations of life ; it instructs us in the happiest modes of imbibing and distributing cheerfulness ; its infinite variety is ever presenting new objects of attraction, and the poetic beauty of its imagery fixes the admiration of the man of letters and the scholar. And yet this is the volume which has been reviled and blasphemed, not in the solitary chamber, not over the table of drunken ribaldry, but in the principal court of judicature in the metropolis of England.

I myself heard in the court, from individuals standing around, something like an expression of approbation of Carlile's demeanour. But

let these deluded persons consider, that a tacit or acknowledged approval of such sentiments is, to all intents, a participation in the crime. Perhaps it is the ability Carlile has displayed which fascinates them ! But a question may arise whether much credit is due to the talent of this individual — his eloquence is not Ciceronian ; and there is very fair reason for presuming that he may have had some learned friends in the shade, who have spread their comforting wings around him. At a late trial, a minister, professing the holy Gospel, thought it not beneath the sanctity of his calling, to counsel and assist, in open court, the publisher of a shameless parody.

Yet, suppose Carlile has evinced the greatest talent, what does that prove? Though we have reason to presume that progress in intellectual knowledge is to constitute one of the main ingredients in future happiness, yet we are told that “ God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise * :” and one of the attributes of Satan is extensive knowledge — “ the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord had made †.”

From the faint picture I have endeavoured to draw of the state of a deistical country, I

* 1 Cor. i. 27.

† Gen. iii. 1.

trust it will not appear very inviting; yet there is in the British character such a spirit of inquiry, such an ardent desire to grasp at every novel event, and expatiate upon it, that I doubt not the trial in question will for some time occupy a considerable portion of the public interest.

It would seem as if there were nothing attractive in peace and tranquillity to the mind of a Briton: for it is a known fact, that the public rejoicings at the close of the last war were transient and lifeless; whereas, at the announcement of a victory, every eye beamed with unnatural fire—every sparkling mansion proclaimed the elation of its inmates. Far be it from me to damp this spirit of excitement: it is an object of proud contemplation, if properly directed; but let it be remembered that the brightest talents and the most dauntless bravery are but as “tinkling cymbals” if employed in a despicable cause.

The spirit of insurrection which now aims at the vitals of the country, surely stamps no honour upon Britain. Let those whom political fervour may have carried beyond what decorum will sanction, look round upon the neighbouring nations, and select a government where their privileges would be enlarged. The French are a versatile people: they waded through oceans

of blood in search of a chimera : they sought liberty, and won a despot. It is true that thousands of this extraordinary people loved their chains ; but this is no example for a free-born Briton : their fetters were dear to them, because the dynasty under which they existed sanctioned every species of pillage, and flattered them with golden chains. France, at the time of its revolution, was professedly a deistical nation ; may we not, then, without being charged with fanaticism, entertain the very probable idea, that the subsequent miseries she has endured were entailed upon her as the fruits of divine indignation ? But Britons could never tolerate national greatness at the sacrifice of national or individual honour.

Those deluded people of this country, who are repeatedly attending in tumultuary herds, at the artful requisition of their leaders, perhaps consider the motives of those leaders as altogether disinterested. But let them weigh every side of the question before they take any precipitate step. These specious pretenders are not the men they would have us believe. To raise for themselves a name, though founded on infamy—to conciliate the unwary for the purpose of betraying and defrauding—to use their constituents as the mere tools and step-ladders of their aggrandizement : these are the sum of their motives

We are aware it is not their intention to lead their forces in armed array to our dismemberment; but they would seek to undermine us: they would sap that noble constitution which they cannot grind to powder. It is impossible to lay a more solid basis for their treacherous attack, than by banishing from our shores religion and morality: but still as they are to be statesmen, they must not put in practice one scheme to the exclusion of another, when they might be co-operating. Therefore, whilst Carile is spreading impiety through the land, and the metropolis in particular, other zealous reformers are instilling revolutionary principles into every county in the kingdom, in order that in a few years our representatives in Parliament may consist only of such as their *radical constituents* may be able to sway. Can any Briton, who sincerely loves his country, take pleasure in such a prospect?

There is nothing more deceptive than the fluctuations of commerce and manufactures in this country, which are frequently ascribed to the ill conduct of Government; whereas their elevation and depression are to be traced to causes totally distinct.

Our governors surely have a greater interest in the preservation of the state than any of us.

The great landholders in the realm have a deeper interest in the constitution than the impoverished mechanic. Instead, therefore, of being the first to dismember the constitution, even supposing them to act upon the most selfish principle, they have, of all others, the most powerful inducements to support and uphold it.

So long as any government exists, it will, perhaps, be difficult to divest the governed of the notion that kings and ministers are the tyrants of the people. But the prevalence of this false sentiment carries with it a conviction that a nation which prides itself on its intellectuality, should not admit and apply it without indisputable evidence.

It is astonishing how differently we view objects, according to our relative situation. I believe few leaders in the Opposition who have been raised from the ranks have been able to discover those glaring errors in Ministry which once struck their tender nerves like a shock in electricity. Let men, in imagination, place themselves in the situation of those they oppugn, and then impartially weigh the offensive act. If this examination can be carried on with candour, ninety-nine grievances in a hundred might be dismissed with commendation. I allude to no special cases, my remarks are general: and

let men carefully weigh all the actions of their lives, and particularly those bearing reference to their accustomed worldly avocations; and compare them with the same species of acts, of which, in their superiors, they are apt so loudly to complain; and that vast disparity which they once discovered, will be greatly diminished.

It must be admitted, that an error in government may produce greater evils than any individual transgression, and, therefore, in the former case a severer scrutiny may be admissible: but as ministers of state are influenced by the same passions which operate upon other men, a harsher standard should not be resorted to, than those who sit in judgment would wish to be erected if they themselves were precisely in the same predicament.

Let us not increase our national or individual distresses, by neglecting our affairs to join in tumultuary assemblies. Our harvest has been plentiful, and we are at liberty to indulge in the fairest expectations. But, let us not dash our rising hopes to the ground. Let us not crush them in the bud. Above all, let us with incessant watchfulness guard our national religion from the attacks of infidelity. By that we must expect to stand or fall. For, after we have forfeited all interest in the promises of God, the

glory of Britain will depart, and be heard of no more, but as we hear of, and tread over, the tombs of our ancestors, dwell on their sepulchral honours, and recount their glorious deeds: nay, this dear luxury will not be left us; for, as we mark the plough in its progress across her desolated cities, we shall ever revert to this bitter reflection, that Britain “was raised to heaven in privileges, but cast herself down to hell in the abuse of them.”

PART VI.

Conclusion.

I HAVE now closed the animadversions which I proposed to make upon this remarkable trial ; but I cannot reconcile it to my mind wholly to dismiss the subject without taking a cursory review of the preceding observations, for the purpose of presenting them to the reader as one connected whole.

Having introduced my remarks by a general allusion to the ferment now existing in the public mind, how the trial in question was calculated to induce fresh excitement, and, with deference, having hazarded an opinion as to the result it was likely to produce upon different classes of the community; it has been then attempted, under the first division of the inquiry—Revealed Religion in general—to expose the absurdity and injustice of applying severer criteria in estimating religion, than are resorted to in the elucidation of science. It has been endeavoured to be proved, that the mysteries in revelation should have no greater effect in undermining our faith, than would the same species of difficulty in geometric speculation. A further

argument has been founded upon the strict rationality of God's procedure in trusting the happiness of all mankind in the hands of one individual, by assimilating it to the case of a father of a family in common life; and some specimens of Carlile's mode of confuting the Scriptures were then brought under review—viz. his proof that the Book of Genesis was composed by two persons, from the circumstance of two of its chapters respectively using the word "God," and then "Lord God" successively throughout, and his doubt founded upon the apparent inconsistency of the Mosaic account, and our modern astronomical notions of the creation of the universe; both of which, it is hoped, have been satisfactorily accounted for. The Sacred Writings have been, then, exculpated from that foul and impudent calumny which is sometimes brought against them on the ground of immorality; it being shown, that those unhappy instances of turpitude in the children of God are exposed for our avoidance, and not for our imitation or approval. The objection to revelation was further combated on account of the peculiar favours bestowed upon the Hebrews, by setting forth the reason of their selection, and that the great and real distinction was reserved for the judgment-day. The remarks on that head were then wound up by stating the evidences of the Christian dispensation, and in conclusion, that

the *atonement* was the central point of the Gentile's hopes.

The second division of the inquiry—Revealed Religion under the Auspices of civil Government, and especially that of Great Britain—was opened by comparing our religion with other systems of belief, it being alleged, that its simplicity and humility were the causes of its general rejection, but that, notwithstanding the obstacles raised to impede its progress, it still advanced, and in times of greatest extremity, its professors were supported by the extraordinary interposition of the Holy Spirit, which was gradually withdrawn as the necessity for it abated. That *veraxa quæstio* was then raised, of the unjustifiable doctrine of Papal supremacy, and it was contended on the ground of prophecy, that there was nothing in such an assumption tending to invalidate revelation, the fallacy being shown at the same time, of drawing any inferences upon that head from the Jewish theocracy; and the general impropriety of adverting for such a purpose, to a nation now labouring under the curse, was incidentally remarked. An examination was then proceeded in, of the state of religion in former times, in our own country; and it was observed, that the Reformation is the point from which our conclusions must be deduced. That the Legislature having as much

right to introduce one law as another, had, in fact, from a deep conviction of its truth, engrafted Christianity into the constitution; and that it formed an absolute part of the law of the land. The several enactments were then enumerated which had passed at various times for the purpose of breaking down, and finally abolishing, the Papal authority in these realms; and hence the natural inference was drawn, that the ecclesiastical establishment had been settled by common consent. It was then undertaken to be proved, that the differences amongst Christians themselves could not, in any degree, invalidate the authority of the Scriptures, and that evidence was furnished of the consistency both of our religion and our government, from the circumstance of toleration being allowed, without endangering either Church or State. It was lastly considered what would be our situation under an open profession of Deism—first, as a nation, and then as individuals; both being illustrated by examples; it having been premised, that there was little real distinction between Deism and Atheism.

Under the third division—The Proof of the Legality of Carlile's Indictment—the folly of those was exposed who contend that a State has no right to impose a religion (even allowing the latitude ours does), upon the same principle as it

would impose a civil obligation. It was shown that the Deist might remain unmolested, if he were peaceable; and if he were otherwise, it was consistent with the strictest reason, he should be punishable: that public retribution, and not silent contempt, is necessary in such a case; but that some *overt* act must precede a prosecution. Reasons were then given for thinking our Established Church a great mean of preserving us from infidelity; and, addressing the Deist, the only prudent and proper path for his procedure was pointed out, and at the same time the certain failure of his mischievous attempts was presented to him. From these general reflections the consideration of the trial was proceeded in. It was shown that the offence which Carlile had committed, was originally and exclusively cognizable at common law; the ecclesiastical courts, though, perhaps, possessing concurrent jurisdiction, yet not having power to carry their judgments into execution. It was further observed, that Carlile was indicted at common law, though equally liable under the Act of William, and it was argued that one substantive transgression immediately incurred and merited the penalty, without the necessity of any previous admonition. The case was supposed, that our opponents might raise an argument against Christianity from the fact of such a prosecution being carried on, as contrary to

its spirit and character; and the division was concluded by controverting that position, upon the clear ground of the civil obligation which impelled it.

Under the fourth head—The Defence of the Delinquent—occasion was taken to remark, that, from extreme liberality, he was suffered to diverge from the strict issue at law, and to enter into extraneous matter, and that that matter was of the most objectionable description: that he had founded an argument in his own favour from the Unitarian Act; when, in fact, it was irrelevant; and that, even supposing that Act could have been primarily pleaded in his favour, yet that his blasphemy would have destroyed the plea. The folly of the Defendant was next reflected upon in summoning witnesses of various religious denominations; and it was shown that their contradictory testimony would in no way have invalidated the truth of Christianity. The anxiety betrayed by Carlile, was then adverted to, to establish the fact of persecutions and schisms having distracted the church; and that being admitted, the obvious inference was drawn, that these persecutors were not real Christians, and that therefore all his proof upon that score amounted to this: that men professing one character had acted another. It was further attempted to remove the vulgar idea of the necessary vindictiveness of

the Attorney General, it being shown, that a Judge or Jury were equally liable to the charge. The fourth division was then closed with a reflection upon the greatness of the question, and an appeal to the best feelings of the unhappy delinquent.

The fifth division—The Effect which the Prosecution should have on the public Mind—was entered upon, by stating the connexion between political discontents and deistical opinions. It was then attempted to prove the impossibility of entertaining correct notions of God without a revelation. This was elucidated by sketching a variety of vague opinions respecting the Almighty, which Deism would necessarily introduce. It was further attempted to display the miseries which a state of irreligion would bring upon us, by reviving the forgotten immoralities of Rome and Sparta. Occasion was then taken to descant upon the privileges and exemptions of our government, as compared with surrounding nations, and particularly France; and a train of reflections was naturally introduced upon the present state of public affairs; the little reason there generally is in the complaints which are raised against the government of our country; and finally, the urgent necessity for guarding our religion against the attacks of infidelity.

I now consign these pages to a liberal and enlightened public. I am aware that the political sentiments here advanced will be deprecated by many of my readers. If I have uttered them with asperity, I calmly stand committed: but if I have only breathed those sentiments of admiration for our excellent constitution, which every true Briton should imbibe with the earliest dawn of reason, I shall have nothing to fear from the severest attacks of criticism; I disavow all attachment to party; I have been defending the Christian religion from the assaults of infidelity, that religion being incorporated with the constitution; I have incidentally published my political views, and only incidentally. May the blessing of God follow this humble effort to defend his great name from insult; and if these remarks should convey peace and conviction to one unsettled and wavering spirit, I shall retire to my privacy with that calm satisfaction which must ever accompany the humblest effort of Christian philanthropy.

THE END.

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